

Scan Our Salt Marshes

As you drive, look to the right over the Refuge's 13,000 acres of tidal salt marsh. This large expanse of grasses and meandering waterways reaches about 2.5 miles, all the way to Delaware Bay, and spans about 8 miles of shoreline. These pristine marshes have remained largely unaltered by humans.

Going with the Flow

Salt marshes are coastal wetlands that are flooded by salt water brought in by the tides and drained as the tides recede. These dynamic systems occur worldwide and can be found on every coast in the U.S.

Teeming with Life

Tidal salt marsh habitat is essential for healthy commercial and recreational fish and seafood species, including white perch, striped bass, blue crabs, and American eels. A variety of saltmarsh species serve as food for animals within the marshes and bay.

Bonus Benefits

Salt marshes protect inland areas from flooding by buffering wave action and absorbing rainwater during coastal storms and hurricanes. The saltmarsh mud soaks up chemicals, and the marsh grass catches litter, which improves water quality.

You may spot a large tanker or container barge rising over the grasses as it navigates the shipping channel to or from Wilmington or Philadelphia.

Coast erosion, saltmarsh subsidence, and snow geese eating the roots of the marsh grass have altered some of the marsh. As you pass Shearness Pool, at high tide look for a large expanse of open water to your right. At low tide, notice the extensive mudflats.

Special species of the salt marsh include: seaside sparrow, marsh wren, clapper rail, willet, northern diamondback terrapin, fiddler crab, blue crab, muskrat, and river otter.

